

The Element of Protest in the Novels of Arvind Adiga

Saty Dev Prajapati

Research Scholar

Department of English

Banaras Hindu University

satydevskd@gmail.com

Abstract

Literature is an expression of the thoughts and the interactions of the people belonging to the particular social, political and geographical area, the inhabitants represent social, religious, moral and political ideologies. There is a very vast gap between rich and poor, the ruling class and the working class, suppressive and suppressed. Some poor and working-class people who are restless to change the society directly oppose the norms and shackles of suppressive. Often they are failed but sometimes they are succeeded so this whole process is known as a protest. Often the protagonist of the novel protests against social boundaries and taboos and the whole story revolves around his story. When a protagonist realizes the humiliation and difference on the basis of caste, creed, religion and position, he is compelled to protest and this protest is also essential to change the thoughts of people for the betterment of society. Arvind Adiga is famous for his Booker Prize-winning book *The White Tiger*. He has written two other novels and a short story collection *Between the Assassinations* (2008). The study particularly focuses on Arvind Adiga's novels *The White Tiger* (2008), *Last Man in Tower* (2011) and *Selection Day* (2016). Through his all the novels he protests against many rigid prevalent problems. The present paper aims to highlight those issues which have affected a larger section of society.

Keywords: Social, political, Geographical, Suppressive, Suppressed

Introduction

Fiction is the expression of the most intimate social awareness of the society in which it is born and evolves. It can well be perceived as society ruminating aloud and bringing into

focus its very sinews. As a creative process, fiction records the creative evolution of society itself. Thus the expansion of the fiction and the development of the consciousness of the societal apparatus are simultaneous and interlocked.

Arvind Adiga's debut novel *The White Tiger* is the story of Balram Halwai struggling for freedom against poverty injustice dishonesty etc. He is presenting a painful disgusting and realistic image of modern India. This novel depicts the collapsing agricultural system so the workers are compelled to migrate to cities for their daily wages. The protagonist migrates from Laxmangarh Bihar to Delhi to work as a driver. Industrialization is a cruel source of inequality, violence and oppression it brings exploitation in the cities and unemployment in rural areas. It leads to the erosion of values and humanity. G. Rai has quoted in the research paper entitled 'Social Criticism in the Novels of Arvind Adiga' he rightly argues regarding this concept,

The limitless increase of man's power of production brought on by the advent of modern science and technology, draws him away (i) from nature, (ii) from his true self, (iii) from his fellows and it works in every way to disintegrate and corrupt man- literally to corrupt- to break up the unity of his nature. (31)

The novelist rebukes by revolting against the system of new transforming India. People are drastically changing in their economic and social condition therefore progress is going on but the level of humanity and morality is shattering down. The villagers of Laxmangarh are suffering from many diseases as well as after a fixed span of time election comes. Although the politicians promise a lot for their basic needs but the real power is in capitalists so the election is useless for villagers but they are busy in a futile discussion.

These are the three main diseases of this country, sir: typhoid, cholera, and election fever. This last one is the worst; it makes people talk and talk about things that they have no say in... Would they do it this time? Would they beat the Great Socialist and win the elections? Had they raised enough money of their own, and bribed enough policemen, and bought enough fingerprints of their own, to win? Like eunuchs discussing the Kama Sutra, the voters discuss the elections in Laxmangarh. (Adiga 98)

The carving of the white tiger was to overhear the voices of downtrodden suppressed people. Balram Halwai departs his village to Delhi works in the house of Ashok. He lives in a separate room under the boundary he couldn't go out without permission. When an order

comes from the master he would have to wake up anytime at night wherever the master goes the servants have to take care of the van. About the white tiger, the writer has clarified that he is a particular animal seen only once in a generation and stands for the good character. It never bends down before the problems so the element of protest is apparent at the beginning of the novel. The appearance of a white tiger is itself a type of wonder. The white tiger symbolizes the power and wealth of India China and Japan. It is a symbol of uniqueness and individualism. He says ‘let animals live like animals; let human live like humans that are my whole philosophy in a sentence.’(Adiga 237)

If we go inside the history of India, a maximum part of agricultural land was owned by the feudal class since they had inherited the property so they maintained their economic and social conditions. But the poor were working in the fields belonging to the feudal class for their livelihood because they had no land. So the worker was exploited everywhere therefore protest was going on to fill the gap between rich and poor. Many laws were passed to abolish the Zamindari system. In Indian society, women are always marginalized. The exploitation was so harsh that they were also protesting against these baseless social norms. Indian English novelists question the status and situation of women in society.

The rich in metropolitan cities treat the servants like pet animal and they always put surveillance over servants. Often quoted lines of Arvind Adiga ‘The dreams of the rich, and the dreams of the poor—they never overlap, do they? seethe poor dream all their lives of earning enough to eat and look like a rich and rich dream of losing weight and look like the poor’ (Adiga 225)

Balam is a victim of poverty of corruption, inequality and so he protests always. The present novel mirrors the realistic condition of darkness. His protest is the voice of every downtrodden. He was a victim of humiliation by his own master as well as his family members. Pinki Madam was driving her car in the effect of liquor; she killed a child under the car on a high-speed road. After some days a lawyer came and settled the whole problem hence he illegally charged Balam for the accident because he was inside the car. He could not tolerate such kind of humiliation and resolute to teach the lesson and finally, he killed his own master when his master was going to deliver a bribe to a politician for theft of his tax. He protested in this matter in two different ways first he took revenge for humiliation and second stopped the delivery of cash in the hands of a corrupt politician.

The white tiger is the story of a poor man in today's India, one of many hundred million who belong to the vast Indian Underclass, people who live as labourers, as servants as chauffeurs and who by and large do not get represented in Indian entertainment in Indian films in Indian books. My hero or rather my protagonist Balram Halwai is one of these faceless millions of poor Indians in the beginning of the novel Balram revolts against the traditional works and thinks to get a handsome amount of money by working as a driver so he went o Mumbai and joined living in the family of Mr. Ashok. (2008. Aravind Adiga in an interview with BBC)

Balram is not accepting everything as other servants do. Some time he opposed also when he gets the opportunity he works against wrongdoing even done by his master. His particular revolt was to fight against poverty and corruption. About poverty and suppression, the writer says the people who live under traps are compared with cooks and goats hanged in front of Jama Masjid. They knew about their next turn but they can do nothing and the mentality of these servants is defined as 'perpetual Servitude'. Balram knew that this type of condition was a type of stumbling obstacle in progress. Caste, religion and nationality are like rooster coop. The novel presents the protest of Indian immerging youths against corruption prevalent in medical, educational finance as well as both government and non-government sectors. Balram couldn't get proper education because his class teacher could not recognize his talent and the principal was always busy stealing the money of Mid Day Meal.

This is also a type of protest against the system of government in which government releases funds on many expenditures but the brokers who are seated on the respected seats snatch mercilessly parts of the liable persons. Once the education inspector recognized Balram as a white tiger and added his name from Balram to White Tiger but that was all. Poverty was so suppressive he could not study further so he involved in his livelihood. His father died of tuberculosis in a government hospital in the absence of a doctor. It was ironic that the word boy provided information about the doctor after taking 10 rupees. Likewise, many patients were dying there waiting for a doctor because there was no other hospital nearby. That pathetic condition of the medical field is presented in the novel. When doctors were coming they were taking rest because they were tired in their own hospitals and openly they were saying that we have been selected by ministers to take rest. The protagonist of the novel had heard about the robbery of the tax. But he saw the exchange of money between the government officers and politicians. The quality of government undertaker of public utility is

under corrupt people, nobody dares to revolt against the system. Balram, the white tiger came against in unusual form. He modelled against to suit the modern lifestyle in the developing world. Globalization resulted from a market economy that beliefs in the end not in the means of the end. Success and profit is the guiding force for the modern man. The social history of the people showed that poor suppressed and underprivileged people were ruthlessly crushed by the powerful rich ones. Slowly Balram came to know that both legal and illegal practices are going on by practitioners of both. Money plays a very important role in business contracts. The commission agents and the capitalists are running the government not the representatives selected in the election. When he went to Delhi he realized that here caste is less interfering but he came to know another social evil to earn and earn more by hook or crook. So means did not matter; ends means a lot.

William Ryan Brown in his '*De-Democratization and the Novels of Arvind Adiga*' pinpoints anti-globalization and de-democratization prevalent in India and he also finds that slavery is dominating over democracy, therefore, he identifies 'The great Indian rooster coop'. To come out from this rooster coop continuous protest is going on. The roosters in the coops are closely aware that they are next in turn but can do nothing the same way the poor, slum dwellers are under the coop of merciless rich and corrupt politician. Only a man who has the courage to see his family beaten, humiliated and burned alive by the master can break the coop this is a revolt in the real sense. That may not be a normal human being but daring and very strong in resolution. Thus the white tiger started from a servant and reached till an entrepreneur.

Adiga's second novel *Last Man in Tower* is the story of a retired school teacher Yogesh A Murthy who struggles too much to save the residential society known as Vishram A. He lives in a cooperative society surrounded by middle-class people. Dharmen Shah started temptation to the belongings of the society to establish his own cooperative business by replacing the belongings to another place from tower A and B. All the residents of the colony were under the greed of the builder because they were getting 20000 per square feet that was very huge amount than their expectation. Only four people were not ready to sign finally three of them also became ready to accept but Masterji was against that. The novel presents the fluctuating conditions of the middle-class family. They are dull against the protest when money comes in their favour. They are ready to do anything without thinking. The novel protests against the mafia Builders who are covering entire cities and taking

handsome money by interchanging property from one hand to another. The globalization of the land has opened the gate of many types of corruption. Vishram Tower A and B five-storey building was the resident of many castes belonging people hardware specialist, timber merchant, chemist, shopkeeper and the teacher. All the people had been living very peacefully for 30 years but Shah the builder wants to establish a new society. Yogesh A. Murthy opposed everywhere but he is very surprised that we are living in a republic country where a person is threatened just before the republic day. His testament of protest was so powerful all the neighbours who had been living for 30 years with him now one by one separated and searched a separate path from the righteous direction of Masterji. But he was a man of strong resolution, he was ready in every situation he went to the police station later on to the lawyer and uncovered all the interconnections among the police, builders and lawyers. The lawyer Mr. Parekh was giving an argument for settlement knowing everything he came back and wrote a confidential letter announcing the whole society.

T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) is the story of the Martyr Thomas Becket who sacrificed his life for Christianity and he never turned back on many types of wealth and greed 'the last temptation is the greatest treason to do the right deed for the wrong reason.' (44) In the same way Yogesh A. Murthy never turned back from his resolution and was moving forward even finally his own neighbours along with murderers killed in his own house. Their peaceful life ended when a real estate developer threw the net of obstacle in the face of greed. He used his power to threaten Masterji with government officers. Finally, Masterji sacrificed his life protesting against the Mafia Builders.

The sacrifice of Yogesh a Murthy is like the sacrifice of a martyr who protests against the prevalent corruption and unfathomable issues. The novel is divided into 9 books and every book of the novel is a step towards bloodshed and harsh cruelty. Masterji was convincing the people about the motto of the mafia that they will buy our society to replicate the slum and swamp because they are too much committed to fraudulent government officers as well as politicians. Finally, the residents who had settled in other societies were praising the courage of Masterji that he was not a coward like us he was working only that work which his conscience was supporting. He was listening to the soul, not the mind. This is the condition of modern people when exact time and great people pass they start praising but that is futile.

Arvind Adiga's novel *Selection Day* (2016) is sports fiction. It is the story of a Chutney seller Mohan Kumar who wants that his both sons Radha Kumar and Manju Kumar could be successful cricket player to play on the world level. First, his dream was to be selected in Mumbai under 19 Team. Their family is very poor and their family has recently settled in Mumbai from a village of western Ghats. Mohan's wife left her husband's home because she was protesting against the obsessive nature of her husband towards seductive social mobility. The novel is a protest against too much imposition of parent's thoughts on their children. They want to make children future according to their own profit and reputation but they have no idea of children talent and area interest. Mohan a poor Chutney seller imposed his thoughts on his children because after being a cricketer his sons can drag out him from the slum of poverty.

Except to grow a thin black moustache- a statement, [Mohan] declared of protest against his ill-luck with, he never complained he never looked back; he simply transferred all his hope in life into young Radha Kumar. (Adiga 34)

Manju and Radha Kumar get admitted to Ali Weinberg International schools that they can play cricket with the school team. One day Mohan came home after work he saw Manju Kumar with a girl in his home so he enraged and punished the boys finally in defend his own leg fractured and Mohan was hospitalized. Manju wanted to be a scientist, not a cricketer however Manju continued playing and became a better cricketer than Radha. When selection day came finally he was selected and Radha Kumar who wants nothing went back to the village. Manju upset swears to never go to play cricket but continuing playing he was selected Mumbai 119 league.

The novel also presents the protest of Mohan against his old chutney selling business therefore he tried to send his children in the field of new social mobility. The novel is also a protest against capitalists in which first-hand greed is offered before any type of support. Adiga has chosen a new theme to write the novel and his particular attention drowned towards religion and its tribal cruelties. In this novel first of all, Mohan went to the temple with his sons for the blessings of success. He feeds them tasteless healthy food and crazy theories. Women for him are like parasites with big hungry eyes. As the brothers were growing they wished to revenge on him but Mohan wants revenge of his own type on anyone who doubted or mocked him. In the quarter-century since liberalization, urban India has seen more social and economic change and upheaval than in entire centuries. To a remarkable and

depressive extent, Indian fiction in English has failed to reckon with this change. For the third book running, Adiga rises to the challenge with a novel of ambition, originality, moral seriousness and sociological insight. To use an analogy appropriate to a novel about batsmanship; where so many of his peers are content of safely nudge ones and twos, Adiga remains willing to take risks in the pursuit of fours and sixes. If he is sometimes caught on the boundary, it is only to his credit.

Conclusion

Arvind Adiga's novels are resonant with the ethos of social conditions generated by growing consumerism and commercialization in India. We get depth analysis of economic inequality, crime and corruption. The main characters of all his novels come in opposition to these social issues. They protest against advanced materialism and moral debasement. The cruel masters flourish because their servants are loyal and much believer in God; what good happens that is the support of their masters and what bad happens is the curse of God so no protest comes but Arvind Adiga's characters either Balram or Yogesh A. Murthy direct protest against problems. They protest with their full potential and they are successful in their protest. Balram kills his own master but he is not repenting of the crime because he knows that this act is a small fraction while their crime and brutalities are continuous from generation to generations. He wants to settle in Bangalore for his own business.

Works Cited

- Adiga, Arvind. *Last Man in Tower*. HarperCollins, 2011.
- . *Selection Day*. HarperCollins, 2016.
- . *The White Tiger*. Free Press, 2008.
- Brown, William Ryan. *De-Democratisation and the Novels of Aravind Adiga*. Diss. U of Alabama, 2013. Huntsville: UMI Dissertations, 2013. Proquest. Web. 5 June 2021.
- Eliot, T.S. *Murder in the Cathedral*. Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1935.
- Iyyenger, K R Srinivasa. *Indian Writing in English*. Sterling Publisher, 1962.
- Kumar, Sanjay. "Social Conceptualization in the Novels of Anita Nair, Chetan Bhagat and Arvind Adiga" *The Criterion* October 2013 Vol. 4 Issue –V, [www. The-criterion.com/V4/n5/Sanjay.pdf](http://www.thecriterion.com/V4/n5/Sanjay.pdf). Accessed 14 July 2019.
- Naik, M.K. *A History Indian English Literature*. Sahitya Akademi, 1982.

"Protest" *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2017, *Merriam-Webster*. www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Protest. Accessed on 05 June 2021.

Rai, G. "Social criticism in the Novels of Arvind Adiga." *Aspects of Contemporary Indian Writing in English* edited by Shashikant Singh, Sarup Book Publishers, 2011, pp 30-42.

Veerangana, Sarita. *Alienation and Beyond: Recent Indian Fiction*. Prestige Books, 2011.